



# Mindful Movement

---

**Deborah Bircham**

**Live Well With Chronic Illness**



# Disclaimer



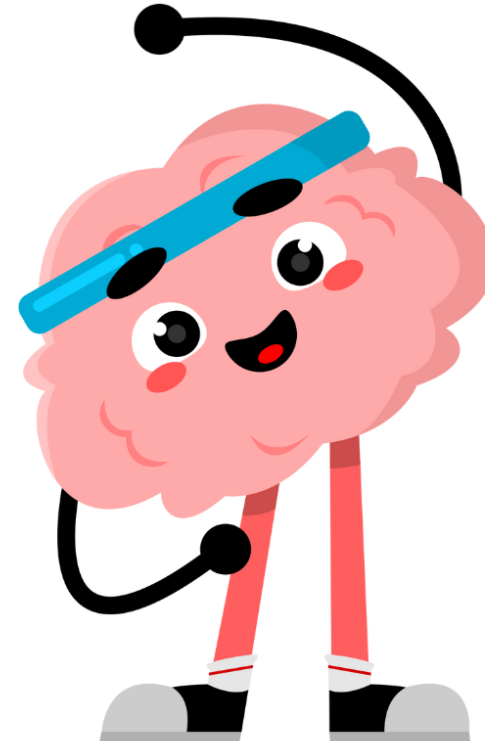
Remember: look after yourselves

Especially if you are hypermobile or have pain, injury or fatigue

Don't push into any movements – slow and gentle is best

Change/ adapt the movements to suit YOU

Let your breath guide you as to the pace of each movement.



# Movement Is Good For Us!



- Lymphatic drainage – needs movement to flow
- Clearing toxins – boosts removal of toxins
- Blood flow and circulation – improves heart health
- Bowel movement – helps peristalsis
- Bone density - osteoblasts need movement
- Muscle strength – builds up muscle
- Hormesis – cell regeneration
- Joint health – synovial fluid



# Movement For Illness



Many people with MCAS struggle to exercise, and experience fatigue and PEM

Pushing to move too much can be dangerous with fatigue

Lack of movement can cause muscle wastage and joint issues and make fatigue worse

Many are caught in a vicious cycle

There is no 'one size fits all' advice – people should only do what they feel able to do.

- Exercise within limits – never 'push through'.
- Encourage people to listen to their body and do what feels right
- Build up slowly.
- **Pacing** - staying strictly within your limits – not pushing through.
- Doing 50% of what you feel capable of doing. Never use up all their energy because they can't replace it.
- Even small movements each day have benefit.
- Study - 3 seconds of movement per day – 12% increase in muscle mass in 1 month

- Walking
- Yoga (Chair/bed)
- Qigong (chair)
- Swimming
- Physio
- Massage



# Movement Can Be Anything!



## Formal Movement

- Yoga – Restorative
- Yoga – seated
- Yoga - bed
- Pilates
- Qigong/Tai Chi (also seated)
- Bed Yoga
- Walking
- Biking (reclining bike)
- Resistance
- Dancing
- Physiotherapy
- Massage

## Informal Movement

- Climbing the stairs
- Climbing 2 steps
- 1 leg lift each side per day
- 1 arm lift each side per day
- 1 Squat while kettle boils
- Small movement when walking through a door
- Breathing!

- Begin to reconnect with your body through gentle movement
- Listen to your body is key – what does it need, what feels right?



# Mindfulness



Becoming aware of your present moment experience, and welcoming what you find with a kind and open heart

- Slow down
- Step out of autopilot
- Connect with yourself
- Intentional action
- Observing
- Being – fully absorbed in this moment
- Focused attention
- Curiosity
- Non-judgement
- Non-striving
- Allowing things to be as they are
- Permission to pause



# Mindfulness – Why Bother?



- The act of doing this calms the brain, calms the nervous system
- Helps us to move out of Fight/Flight and into Rest/Digest
- Allows our nervous system to relax and regulate
- Reduces the production of adrenaline and cortisol
- Reduces inflammation
- Increases resilience
- Improves mental wellbeing



# Mindful Movement



- But – this can be challenging for us!
- It can feel too hard to sit still
- Not everyone finds it easy to meditate
- Trauma
- Pain
- Busy brain
- Anxiety
- Nervous System Inflammation
- Agitation
- Neurodiversity - ADHD

These can all make traditional ‘mindfulness meditation’ feel too hard



# Body Connection



When we live with pain and illness, we often ‘check-out’ of our bodies

Being in our bodies feels hard

We don’t want to be there

This leads to disconnect between body and mind

We lost the ability to ‘read’ our bodies, to listen to them, to tune in to the subtle signals it’s giving us



# Body Reconnection



Movement can be a bridge between doing and being

We don't have to sit still in order to meditate!

We can Move Mindfully

The key is 'stretch without striving'

This is NOT an exercise class!!

This is not about losing weight or 'getting fit' in the traditional sense

This is a way to reconnect to our bodies and begin to move in a way that is safe

The key is NOT to slavishly follow a routine, but listen to our own bodies and move in a way that feels right for them



# Ways to Move Mindfully



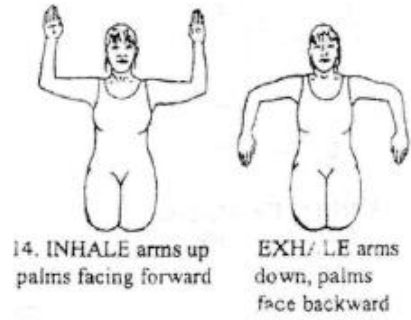
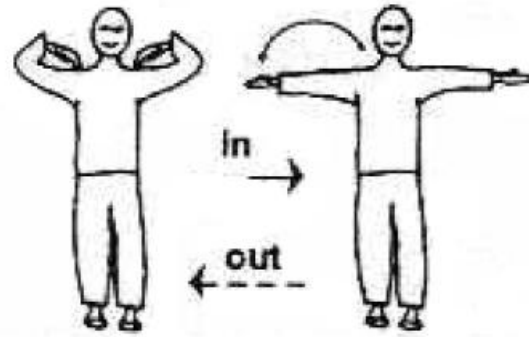
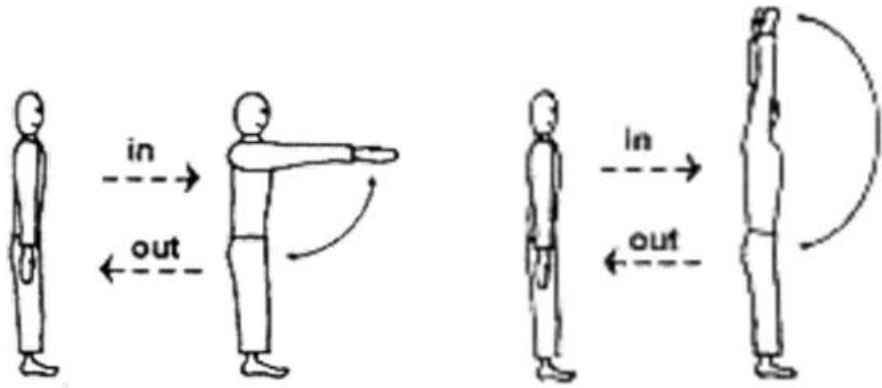
- Formal movement meditation
- Mindful walking – 5 steps challenge, on the way back from the shops etc
- Mindful walking – longer, purposeful walk in nature to observe nature using the senses
- Gentle stretches – arms up and down, neck side to side, rolling shoulders
- Walking a Word – saying a chosen word with each step – imagine you are ‘stepping’ into that word – Courage, Calm, Peace, Strength, Confidence etc
- Stroking hands, stroking face, self-hug.
- Any sport or exercise you already do – Pilates, Yoga, etc
- Mindful chores – brushing teeth, having a shower, washing up



# Mindful Movement 'Rules'

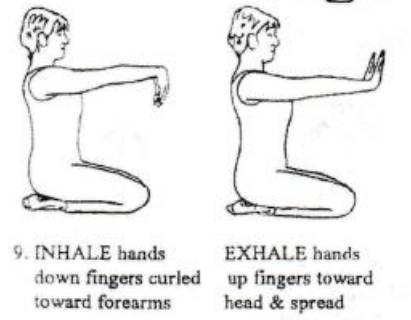


- Do what feels good
- Do what is available to you
- Stop if anything feels painful
- The point is not to strain or stretch
- The point is to FEEL
- To OBSERVE what it really feels like to move
- To LISTEN deeply to your body – what does it want?  
What does it not want? Respect its signals
- Be curious
- Move slowly, intentionally
- Focus your attention on the physical sensation of moving - mind and body together
- Small movements, tiny movements
- Coordinate your movement with your breath – in breath as move up, outbreath as move down.
- Can you feel the muscles moving?
- Can you feel the air against your skin as you move?
- Notice dominant hand – any tension there
- Does one side feel different to the other?
- Notice how you feel after each movement – notice any changes
- You can close your eyes - optional



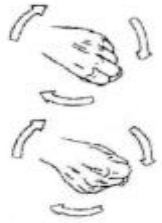
14. INHALE arms up palms facing forward

EXHALE arms down, palms face backward

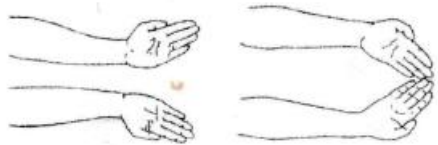


9. INHALE hands down fingers curled toward forearms

EXHALE hands up fingers toward head & spread



11. INHALE fists out EXHALE in 3x then reverse circles



10. INHALE palms flat & out

EXHALE palms flat & in



asana

INHALE point foot curling the toes

2.



1. INHALE soles face out keep feet upright.

EXHALE soles face in keep feet upright.



3. INHALE circling out EXHALE circling in



16. INHALE arch back, squeeze blades



EXHALE round back open shoulder blades



17. INHALE erect EXHALE side bend



18. INHALE sit erect EXHALE spinal twist



19. INHALE head up



EXHALE head down



20. INHALE sit erect EXHALE head to side



21. INHALE center head EXHALE rotate head

Freestyle – move how you feel you need to.

# Pause and Reflect



How did that feel?

Which movements felt good?

Which ones might you want to do again?

How could you incorporate some mindful movement into your day?

How is your mood now? How do you feel?



# Mindful Walking



If you want to, if you have space and it feels ok and available to you

You can get up

(If not accessible, walk on spot, move feet sitting down, or use hand:

Walk 5 steps (or however many you have room for)

Walking slowly, intentionally, mindfully.

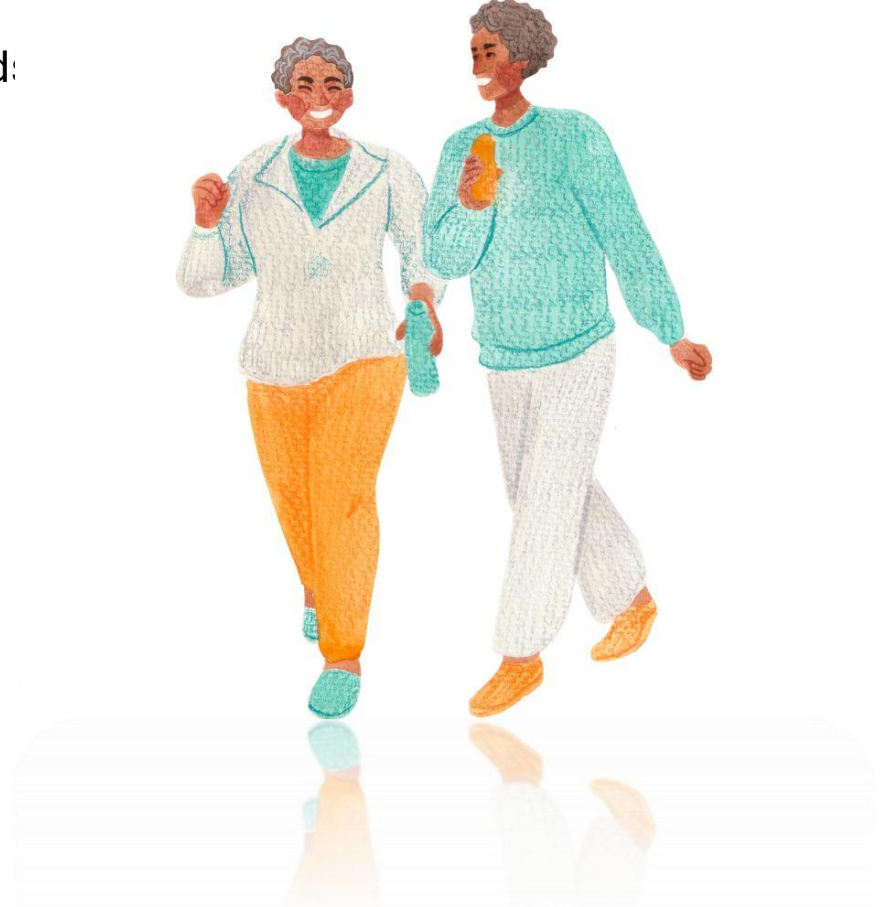
Focus your attention solely on each step

Turn, walk 5 steps back, slowly intentionally

Repeat

Add in counting – count each step

Add in ‘walking a word’ – choose your word and step into it



# What Do You Notice?



How did that feel?

Did you like that?

Would you do it again?

How can you do some mindful walking in your day?





**The End**

**Thank you for Listening**

**Any Questions?**

